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## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1. An illumination device which comprises a light source and a light guide member having an entrance surface for receiving light coming from the light
- source, an exit surface for outputting light in an illumination direction, and a diffusion region for reflecting and/or diffusing an incoming light beam across a longitudinal direction, comprising diffusion means inserted in an optical path of light which is
- 10 emitted by the light source and enters the entrance surface.
  - 2. The device according to claim 1, wherein said device comprises a plurality of light sources, and said diffusion means is common to light beams coming from the plurality of light beams.
  - 3. The device according to claim 1, wherein said diffusion means comprises a light diffusion surface formed on the entrance surface.
- 4. The device according to claim 1, wherein said diffusion means comprises a three-dimensionally patterned surface formed on the entrance surface.
  - 5. The device according to claim 1, wherein said diffusion means comprises a three-dimensionally patterned surface formed on a surface of a resin which
- 25 covers the light source.

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- 6. The device according to claim 1, wherein said diffusion means comprises a scattering agent contained in a resin that covers the light source.
- 7. The device according to claim 2, wherein the plurality of light sources are integrally packaged.
- 8. The device according to claim 2, wherein the plurality of light sources comprise LEDs.
- 9. The device according to claim 8, wherein the plurality of LEDs have different emission wavelengths.
- 10 10. The device according to claim 9, wherein the plurality of LEDs respectively have red, green, and blue emission wavelengths.
  - 11. An image sensor comprising an illumination device cited in claim 1, a lens for imaging optical
- information at a read position, and a photoelectric conversion element for receiving an optical image formed by said lens, and converting the optical image into an electrical signal.
- 12. An image reading apparatus comprising an image 20 sensor cited in claim 11, and driving means for changing a relative position between said image sensor and an object to be read.
  - 13. An information processing system comprising an image reading apparatus cited in claim 12, and an
- 25 external information processing apparatus for controlling said image reading apparatus.